HARAMBEE FLAME

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KWANZAA

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... Giant. He weighs ...ounds. He is a huge grea... ...ng what is supposed to be an ...gesturing threateningly. In

Television: A Whistle-Stop Tour

The hit song is playing - something by Simply Red - and the camera pans the folks jerking about and gyrating very American Bandstandish to the beat of the song, then to the young Caucasian woman in the skin-tight pants and the coy look in her eyes. A zoom to the stockinged thighs of the African woman doing her pelvic thrusts with legs wide apart. The camera moves up and up to give us a damned near gynecologist's view in the shadows of the short, short skirt. Baby. Ooo, Baby. Choo, choo. Soul Train. The dance floor is slick from gobs, drops, and puddles of Soft Curl, hair-relaxants and straighteners. A commercial break. A young African woman is braiding her daughter's hair. Next scene: The same woman and her daughter, but the mother is now running a comb easily through her daughter's miraculously straight hair. The woman is all smiles and tells us how much nicer things are now that she's introduced her daughter's hair to PCJ.

Family Feud, Love Connection, Newly Wed Game, Dating Game... African men and women try, and often quite successfully, to out-Caucasian the Caucasians in demeaning each other and cheapening the most intimate aspects of their relationships. They perform above and beyond the call of duty in the tube's incessant beckoning for absence of dignity. "Oh, I thought he was cute. Then I saw his car and it was really a turn-off." "I can't make it with a woman whose lips are too big." "Yes, then we went to his apartment and, you know--tee, hee,hee--I found out in the morning that his breath is bad when he first wakes up."

Paper cups and other refuse is being thrown into the aisles and toward the ring. Boos are loud. Oh. my God. It's The Ugandan Giant. He weighs more than four-hundred pounds. He is a huge greasy-fat man. He's wearing what is supposed to be an African mask. He's gesturing threateningly. In

the theatrical, circus world of "professional" wrestling, there are good guys and bad. The Ugandan Giant is a bad guy and a head-hunter besides.

The Million Dollar Man is standing there in the interview space bedecked in sequened pants and jacket. He's talking mucho stuff. And who is this standing next to this swaggering Caucasian? Why, it's the muscle-bound Virgil, standing quietly, holding cash in his hand. The interviewer asks Virgil a question but, in his role as the Million Dollar Man's right-hand colored boy, he does not respond. He only speaks when his patron authorizes him to do so.

Enters a man with a big white bird on his shoulder. He's flapping his arms like he's a bird himself and showing teeth for days. The fans are eating this up. He's their boy, Coco B. Ware, the Bird Man. He's a good guy.

All this television. All these African folks--some in suits and ties, some in mini-skirts, some in wrestling shorts or tights. All this skinning and grinning, this demeaning of their African selves, this trivializing of themselves and their experiences, this playing the buffoon for America. In the sixties we bemoaned the absence of African folks on television. Now we see our faces on the tube with some regularity. But, far too often,

the African folks who do appear on the set serve no constructive function for us.

There is a New Testament parable which speaks of the Lord giving to each of three men a certain number of coins. Two of the men go out into the world and increase what has been given to them. Subsequently, the Lord rewards them for their industriousness. But the third man simply buries his coins. Not only does he gain nothing but receives a verbal lashing from the Lord besides. What many of us who wind up on the tube do is worse than simply burying coins. We out-and-out

(Cont. on p. 12)

FLAME Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.) is a pan-Africanist newsletter. This means that the FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any artificial distinction between African people based solely on place of birth. Therefore, references to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this policy is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter the terms used therein to fit our editorial policy.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles areeby the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(aka David Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. Send your submissions to: HARAMBEE FLAME
Harambee Afrikan Cul. Org
Attn: Editor/Mondo
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE 68502-0500

Note on poetry submissions: We are looking for poems that make effective use of imagery, that have beauty and power, and thats do not sacrifice such for the sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme.

From Other Sources

Mandela City Referendum Defeated Again

"A ballot referendum that would have opened the door to the Greater Roxbury section of Boston forming a separate municipality--presently referred to as Mandela, in honor of South African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela and his wife Winnie --was defeated for a second time today. Despite winning in nine presincts that would have been affected by the measure, the measure lost by less than a 2-1 margin.

"The non-binding referendum would have demanded that the state legislature study the issue of incorporation seriously and outline the issues that would be involved in a transition to an incorporated city. After this would come a series of legislative and legal actions before the governor to be signed. When and if the governor approved, the refedendum would go before people of Greater Roxbury for a final binding vote...

"'This is an issue of empowerment. It's not about race, it's about delivery of services', said Sadiki Kambon, chairman of Focusing Attitudes Toward Empowerment. Project F.A.T.E. has been a major organizing force in placing the incorporation issue on the agenda here(Boston). 'The other issue is economics. The city of Boston would be losing a large chunk of its economic base.

"'Seventy percent of all the vacant land in the city of Boston is here', Kambon explained. 'The bottom line is that 50% of our youngsters are dropping out of school, we have the highest rate of infant mortality, unemployment is going up. We're talking about being in control of our own destiny. ..'"

-Above passages excerpted from "GreaterrRoxbury Incorporation Move Defeated," which appears on on page 2 of the Nov. 17 THE NAT'L ALLIANCE(NY)

Africans And Latinos In New York Call For Hearings On Police Misconduct

"Relations between the police department and Blacks and Latinos have reached a new low. Minority community leaders are calling for another round of House Judiciary Subcommittee hearings on New York Police Department misconduct, chaired in 1983 by Rep. John Conyers(D-Mich.)...

"The cases documented by CLSJ(M edgar Evers Center for Law and Social Justice) occurred in 1988 and did not include the deaths of Yvonne Smallwood, a Black woman who died under suspicious circumstances while in police custody, or Eleanor Bumpers, the 64-year-old Black woman killed by a police shotgun blast while being evicted from her city-owned apartment...

"State Assemblyman Roger Green(D-Brooklyn) joined Wareham(of CLSJ) and community activist Rev. Herbert Daughtry in calling on Gov. Mario Cuomo and the state legislature to enact increased penalties for the antibias laws already on the books. They are also calling for a community controlled police review board, citing the current board's slowness to act...

"The New York City Police Department is overwhelmingly white--27,000 uniformed members including 3000 Blacks and 3000 Latinos--while the city's population is more than half composed of people of color.

"But the department's racial problems are not confined to Black and Latino neighborhoods; they are also present in the station house...

"Two months ago Roger Abel, president of the Guardians Association, a group representing the interests of Black officers, called on the police department's Equal Opportunity Office to investigate the situation at the 113th precinct. Black offi-

cers there complained of being ignored on two occasions when they called for backup units. At least two dozen complaints were lodged by Blacks against whites concerning episodes of racist behavior ranging from verbal insults to racial slurs scrawled on locker room walls..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Blacks, Latinos Confront Racist NYC Cops," which appears on page 9 of the Nov. 16 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y.)

National Conference On Reparations For Africans In America To Be Held

(At the time of this printing, the conference has already been held. However, we have not yet received coverage of it.)

"The second National Conference On Reparation For Black Americans will attempt to answer the demand for reparations. The second conference, called by the Self-Determination Committee, Inc., a community based Black Nationalist organization, Robert Brock, President, is aimed at implementing the Resolution of the First National Conference...

"The Second National Conference on Reparations For Black People will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 18, 19, 20...'The Conference issues and aims will be critically examined and discussed for the development of a plan of organized action to put forward a DEMAND and carry out the demand to recover, receive or take back the value of slave labor, goods and services according to the concept of the payment of reparations as either a War Demand or a Legal Demand from the government of the United States of America and its sovereign citizens' said Robert Brock...

"The idea of Japanese receiving reparations for three years of internment has heightened the

awareness of Black Americans to also receive reparations for more than three-hundred years of captivity and three-hundred years of unpaid and uncompensated labor and the value thereof..."

-Above passages excerpted from "National Conference On Black Reparations," which appears on pages 1 and 2 of the Nov. 19 MILWAUKEE COURIER.

Economic Goals Pursued in Angola

"...Angola has one major advantage over most other underdeveloped countries with severe economic difficulties--it produces oil. Petroleum output, which now averages 450,000 barrels per day, has tripled in the past decade. A further increase--to 500,000 barrels a day--is expected in 1990, from fields already discovered. New exploration is underway all up and down the coast, where oil companies from around the world are competing for concessions...

"A recent survey of the country by the Economist Intelligence Unit in London concludes that 'Angola should be one of Africa's richest countries'. Properly managed, its fertile farm land has the potential to feed much of Central and Southern Africa. Its rivers have the capacity to provide abundant water and hydro-electric power. Its diamonds and iron ore are plentiful enough to join oil as major new revenue producers.

"Angola is seeking foreign investors to help it reach this potential. The government wants assistance to revive coffee production. It wants help to expand its airline and hotels, to rebuild roads and to exploit the country's vast store of minerals ...

"Key to success in attracting new foreign investors is implementation of the new economic program, known by its Portuguese acronym SEF. The Saneamento Economico e Financeiro, which literally means

'economic and financial cleanup', involves a range of reforms, including economic decentralization, liberalization of price controls, devaluation of the kwanza and an increased role for the private sector...

"A series of new laws relating to SEF have been approved by the national assembly this year. Most importantly, a new Foreign Investment Act was published in July. The law is intended to provide 'assurances and incentives' to investors, simplify procedures, improve profitability and diversify the types of agreements available to investors, according to an explanatory introduction being circulated by the government to interested businesses..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Luanda Looks To Market For Economic Rescue," which appears on page 13 of the Nov. 23 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y.).

...

Society Of Refugees Building A Nation

"...The Polisario Front administers this previously uninhabited area lent by Algeria to shelter Saharan civilians who fled their country when Morocco invaded in 1975. Currently some 170,000 Saharans live in the Tindouf camps.

..."The RASD(Saharan Arab Democratic Republic) has been recognized by 71 countries, and is a full member-state in the Organization of African Unity.

"The society the refugees have built is a well-organized and politically mobilized community, which the Saharans regard as a nation in exile. Twenty-seven Saharan doctors, nine female, practice medicine in four provincial hospitals in the camps. Each daira(town) has its own nurseries and primary school. The Saharans have also built two large secondary schools, where some 7300 boys and girls study and live. There is also a woman's school

with female teachers. Some 1500 women live at the facility with their families, including their husbands when they are home from combat in the occupied Western Sahara.

"All young people learn to read and write Hassania, the Saharans' dialect of Arabic, as well as Arabic and Spanish, the language of the former colonial power. English and French are also taught. Students learn about their people's history, third world liberation movements and Islam. Both boys and girls receive military training; women fought at the front earlier in the war, but now concentrate on organizing the camps. Women make up 70% of the population in the 25 towns because many men are in combat, and they hold most of the productive, administrative and leadership jobs...

"Each daira has its own People's Popular Council, comprised of five working committees and a secretariat...Council members are elected each year at a 3-day-long mass meeting in which work is evaluated, the next year's plans laid and the leadership criticized and voted on by all residents 16 and over. The leadership body in Bjudor has 11 women and five men. There are work committees to deal with food and housing, health, education and cultural matters and social relations..."

-Above passages excerpted from "Saharans Build 'Nation In Embryo'", which appears on page 10 of the Nov. 9 THE GUARDIAN(N.Y.).

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Note to FLAME subscribers: We've been having some problems over the past couple of months with respect to the printing of the FLAME. If you are missing an issue(s), please let us know.

throw them away. The African population in the U.S. has gone from having practically no African images on television to having a glut of minus images, images that bring to mind E. Franklin Frazier's BLACK BOURGEOISIE and Frantz Fanon's BLACK FACE/WHITE MASK. And many times, these images come not from professional t.v. personalities but from every-day African folks appearing as guests or audience members on talk shows, game show contestants, etc.

When we see African actors on the tube portraying images that either demean us with respect to character or strip us of who we are relative to our African heritage, we may be inclined to dismiss the significance of these actors' presentations by saying to ourselves, "Well, what else are we to expect from those Hollywood negroes?" But though the attitudes and/or mind-sets of professional African actors might not be reflective of the attitudes and/or mind-sets of African people in this country in general, the prevalence of a virtually total lack of African consciousness on the part of the every-day African folks we see on the tube may very well suggest that quite a large segment, if not an actual majority, of America's African population is in the same cultural shape.

But what may appear to be a profound lack of cultural consciousness on the part of many of the African folks we see on the tube may be something with even worse implications. It may be that quite a few of us have become so infected by materialism, so obsessed with the big green, that matters of character, principle, etc. can be readily cast aside in exchange for that big green.

And there is another issue--fear, the fear that many of us have of honestly expressing ourselves in front of Caucasians, of even being ourselves in front of them, especially when we believe that a given expression of honesty would make us appear ungrateful for what "the good white folks have done for us."

None of the above, however, diminishes the role that racism plays in the development and perpetuation of the demeaning and de-Africanizing portrayals of us that we see on television. It is, afterall, Caucasians who do the vast majority of producing, writing, and directing in the world of television. It is Caucasian-run corporations who pay for the great bulk of commercial time. And while we can have an impact on that world, we can't, under present conditions, control it.

We can't be held responsible for television's game of racist image-making. At least, we can't be held responsible for the design of that game. But we certainly must shoulder much of the blame for the playing of the game. Caucasians are not portraying African characters. They're not appearing on the screen with burnt cork smudged on their faces. It is we who are the players when African characters are portrayed. When Okra Wind Flea speaks with shame and ridicule about how her hair used to be nappy, that is not Barbara Walters in black-face. That is, in fact, Okra. When the Million Dollar Man's right-hand boy, Virgil, stands there next to his pretend-benefactor and plays the role of slave, championing the cause of his master, it is not some neo-John Howard Griffith working on a BLACK LIKE ME update. It is Virgil - or whatever his actual name is - we're looking at, an African; and no one is forcing him to demean himself and the rest of us.

When we examine and discuss racism, we need to consider the roles we play in actively helping in its perpetuation. Caucasian America does quite an adequate job of promoting racism on its own. Our assistance is not required. Thank you.

Back In Time

Before dawn on the 11th of September 1851 a horn sounded from an old stone farmhouse near Christiana, Pennsylvania, a village between Philadelphia and Gettysburg. Upstairs seven black people - fugitive slaves - were watching for raiders...

Armed with this hideous law(Fugitive Slave Law of 1850) slave-owner Edward Gorsuch of Maryland went man-hunting in Pennsylvania. He had been tipped off that four ex-slaves, who had escaped from his plantation some two years previously, were living in the Christiana area. In Philadelphia the federal commissioner gave Gorsuch warrants and a federal marshal to lead a posse. But the man-stealers were being watched by the Vigilance Committee of the integrated Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society, and a messenger sped off to warn the black people of Christiana.

Armed and ready, William Parker(who had escaped from bondage in Maryland in 1839), his family and friends and two of Gorsuch's fugitives waited in Christiana. When the posse crept up to the house in the dark of the night the warning signal by Parker's wife aroused the neighborhood. The kidnappers launched a volley of bullets to cut her down. Safe behind the thick stone walls of the house, she went on blowing the horn. The posse was surrounded by some 15 to 25 armed blacks and a few whites. A Quaker miller advised Gorsuch to leave. But Gorsuch vowed, "I will have my property, or go to hell." He got his wish. When the smoke cleared, Gorsuch lay dead...WORKERS VANGUARD Nov. 4, 1988

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Announcements

Black Seeds has published a 1989 Historical & Educational Calendar. According to the Black Seeds promotional material: "Under the theme 'Black Nation Rising', its 40 pages are packed with stimulating daily Black Facts, a Reading List, a Youth Page, a Map of Africa, Facts on the Black Diaspora, & Kwanzaa information, all surrounded by striking graphics. Also, each month includes a thoughtful, well written commentary on issues & people of timely importance. A new feature is the bonus fold-out of a Black Historical Figure..." Contact Black Seeds(1217 17th St. N.E., D.C. 20002; 202-398-4104) for additional information.

Clyde R. Davis announces the formation of Black Conscience Syndication, which has as its purpose that of providing newspapers and magazines with writing and art that is vital to the well-being of the "Black" Community. For more information, as well as a packet of sample materials, write to: Clyde R. Davis, President; Black Conscience Syndication; 21 Bedford St.; Wyandanch, N.Y.; 11798. The telephone number is: (516) 491-7774.

The World Saxophone Quartet is scheduled to perform at the Kimball Recital Hall(Univ. of Nebraska) on Jan. 19 at 8 p.m. The brochure states that the performance will cover a wide range of "jazz"(African-American Classical Music)--blues, ballads, bop, etc. Call the Kimball Hall Ticket Office at 472-3375.

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization Kwanzaa observance(at which our Brothers and Sisters may be present) will be held on Saturday, Dec. 31 from 4:30-8:30 p.m. If you are interested in attending, write to: Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500; (402) 471-3161. Call betwen the hours of 12:30 and 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Snow -Sarah Johnson

JOURNEY

OF A SNOW

FLAKE WHITE

FROM THE HEAVENS

TO THE EARTH

UPON THE GROUND

IT LANDS

INTO A PUDDLE

OF MUD IT PLEADS

WITH THE SUN FOR

RESCUE THEN BACK UP

INTO THE HEAVENS WHERE

IT IS ONCE AGAIN REFINED

ALWAYS BIGGER AND WHITER

THAN BEFORE ONCE MORE

FORGETTING FROM WHENCE

IT CAME BELOW THE MUD

PUDDLE AWAITS ITS ARRIVAL.

Sarah Johnson is a student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and is a member of the African People's Union.